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★ JUN 7 - 1933 ★

U. S. Department of Agriculture

WEDNESDAY, June 14, 1933.

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Appetite Aids." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Maybe you remember the story of the little girl who refused stew whenever it appeared on the family dinner table. At last her mother, weary of such fussy behavior, insisted severely that her young daughter must either eat the stew or give a good reason why not.

In tears the child explained, "Oh, Mother, I would like stew if only it looked pretty."

Well, parents may pooh-pooh and say, "Nonsense" to all such childish notions, but in that youngster's remark is a suggestion for everyone who has the job of feeding a family. Good looks as well as flavor and food value are important for the success of every dish at every meal. Good looks waken appetites. As the old saying goes, "We eat with our eyes." A tempting appearance is especially important when you're serving low-cost meals and economy dishes. Humble inexpensive dishes like stew find their way to our tables frequently these days. But just because a dish costs little doesn't mean that it must look dreary and unappetizing. Far from it. Cheap food can look and taste exactly as tempting as expensive food, only you have to use a little care and thought in preparing and serving it. Another important point to remember about the looks of food is variety. Never mind if you must have the same food over and over again. Serve it in different ways. Make it look both delicious and different when it comes on the table. Then the family won't grow tired of it. Dress up the everyday foods in different ways and they'll seem like different foods.

"But how can you dress up stew? How can you make a lowly dish like this different and attractive?" I hear somebody asking.

You'd be surprised at the number of different ways to serve stew. Far too many people just turn this mixture from the kettle into any dish big enough to hold it, and let the serving go at that. Too bad, when you can make a very handsome dish by using a little care and originality. For example, you can serve stew with a white border. The border may be of hot, flaky, boiled rice. Or it may be of hot, boiled hominy. Or it may be of fluffy, hot, mashed potatoes. Suit yourself. Use a large platter and be sure the platter is hot. Arrange your rice or your hominy or your mashed potatoes in a border around the edge of the platter. And be sure they're hot, too. Then pour your bubbling hot, fragrant stew in the center. A dish for a king! Stew served this way is probably nicest if you make it with small pieces of meat, and without potatoes, since you'll have potatoes or other starchy food in your border. Of course, you know that you can make excellent stew with many different low-cost meats--inexpensive cuts of beef, lamb or veal. You also make stews of fowl or older rabbit. Chicken and rabbit fricasees are old-time favorites that are first cousins to stews. Long slow cooking with moisture is the rule for making inexpensive cuts of meat tender.

Speaking of fricasees reminds me that this dish is usually served with dumplings. You cook the dumplings on top of the fricasee and then you serve them that way. You can use dumplings in the same way with other stews. Still another way to serve stew is with biscuits. Pour the hot mixture in a hot serving dish. Then cover the top with hot baking powder biscuits, split in half--something like meat pie, -- you see. In the same way you can use rounds of pastry or thin rounds of toast. If you want to be even more dressy, slice a hard-cooked egg, put it through a ricer and sprinkle over the toast to give a touch of color.

These ideas for variety are just as good for that other large class of inexpensive main dishes, the creamed mixtures -- creamed chicken, creamed dried beef, ham or any other creamed meat, creamed fish or vegetables and meat creamed together. These are all delicious served with a white border or with biscuits, toast, or rounds of pastry. Another way to serve creamed foods is in pastry cups or shells. Bake these on muffin tins turned upside down. Just before serving fill each shell with the hot mixture and place a few freshly cooked new green peas on top of each. They will add an attractive bit of color. So will a dash of paprika or some bits of bright red pimiento. For color you can always depend on chopped parsley. Sprinkle it over the top of the stew or the creamed mixture just the last minute before serving.

Good looks in food often depend on contrast--contrast in color and texture. Rich brown stew with a white rice border or creamed chicken with crisp brown toast and a bit of red pimiento or green parsley. Not too much color. Just enough to make the food interesting.

The menu today is very simple and inexpensive, but planned to appeal by its looks as well as its taste. The main dish is a new one--cream ham on rice patties with chopped parsley as a garnish. Then, new green cabbage boiled only a few minutes until just tender and served with butter. For dessert, tart fruit pie--berry pie or lemon pie.

Now how to make those rice patties for the creamed ham?

Cook boiled rice until it is quite soft. Drain it, but do not rinse. Spread the rice about an inch thick in a shallow pan, pressing it down well. Then cut into rounds with a biscuit cutter. Place the rounds in a buttered pan, adding a bit of butter to each. Brown in a hot oven (400° to 415°F.), or under a broiling flame. One cup of uncooked rice makes about twelve patties. Pour the hot creamed ham made with white sauce, ground cooked ham and chopped green pepper over the patties.

Tomorrow: "Useful Herbs to Raise in Your Window Box or Dooryard."

